

Stan Posner & Sandra Phillips-Posner
Travelsmart and Smart Shopping Montreal
P.O. Box 43527 CSP Roxboro,
DDO QC H8Y 3P4 CANADA

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee, Conservation and Preservation Sub-Committee

As travel publishers, broadcasters and writers we spend our lives promoting regional areas in states such as yours. We entice visitors to stop there, enjoy life and spend lots of money. The way our job works is that we spend time with the local CVB personnel, and they give us a window into what there is to do and see and write about in that particular area which fits exactly into our story lines. They share with us background information which make their local places of interest or restaurants stand out. This local insider information, which is not available "on the net", is invaluable and is what makes guides like ours stand out.

You may say that we can find this information in brochures or on your web site, but that is not so. It would take hours or days poring over maps to sort out the information we need on the subjects we need for our writing and broadcasting. In one short meeting and then follow up e-mails, a live person cuts it to the essentials of what we in the travel writing industry need. You cannot underestimate the value of this personal contact. It cannot be someone who does not live and work in the area either.

Recently we had this experience in another State where the new "overall" PR person we talked to knew less about the regional area than we did. We were very embarrassed for that State (and have told other writers about the difficulty). We could not even report about the restaurant he/she chose for us, since it did not fit into the parameters of our guide book. How many media people do you think would go back there to write stories? Not many. The business relationships formed in places where you know your work will be made easier by the help you get from the State tourism staff often determines the quantity of media attention you get.

It was by meeting with the fabulously helpful regional CVB reps in your State (Sue Henrique, Suzette Benitez, Eliza Cole, Diane Moore), and through conversations and meals with them that we discovered all of these insider tips, which translated into great fun stories:

An accident caused the clam hash recipe at Pat's Country Kitchen
That we were sitting next to the table of a former Mayor of Bridgeport and Sue made it possible to do an interview.
There's a Garbage Museum (have used this endless times in interviews - most recently on Philadelphia NBC 10! show -
There's a graveyard in the basement of a church in New Haven
You can eat real Mexican food like cactus salad at Zavala
A piece of the World Trade Center is in the Knights of Columbus museum
The local breakfast joint "Nicks", where everyone knows your name and the food is delish
That we were not to miss the Creme Brule French toast at the Old Lyme Inn, and it was so good that the recipe wound up in our book
There's a FREE tour of Yale
That Lenny & Joe's has a carousel on site - great for family travel
Lenny's Indian Head still uses Grandmother Georgianna Moon's clam soup recipe
Maritime Aquarium made a green choice by re-cycling a foundry

In a State like NJ, which has more miles on it, but doesn't offer up live humans to work with, we are forced to spend lots of time searching the areas for stories, and we simply don't find enough by ourselves. So if you look in our book, Drive I-95, you will see hardly any exciting food or things to do in NJ (only 10 pages, of which 1/3 are only stories about the historic people the rest areas were named after). However in CT there are 15 pages chock full of places to see and sleep and eat, enticing our readers to experience for themselves.

Local CVB staff know their own regions and the businesses (personal contacts at Inns, B&B's, etc) in the area, and are able to let us know in advance when new hotels, restaurants, sites, events of interest are coming, great for new story ideas. They are your front-line troops grabbing us with their lobster pincers and keeping us coming back for more. It would be like "cutting off your nose to spite your face" to lose these money magnets who not only bring the writers in to write the stories but drum up the businesses to attract tourism too. In down economic times, local tourism, shorter trips, the safety of your own region is where people are planning to go. You want them to stay in or come to Connecticut and so do we. Don't discard your most valuable assets.

Happy Trails,
Sandra Phillips-Posner and Stan Posner
DriveI95.com